

# ESTHER.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Esther is entitled by the Jews, "the volume of Esther," or simply "the volume." Anciently it was always written on a separate roll, which was read through at the feast of Purim. The Greek translators retained only "Esther," which thus became the ordinary title among Christians.

1. There is much controversy concerning the date of "Esther." The extreme minuteness of the details and vividness of the portraits in "Esther" certainly suggest the hand of a contemporary far more decidedly than any occasional expressions suggest a composer who lived long after the events commemorated: and the tone of the Book is in accord with the history which it narrates, and is not unlike that of Zechariah. Therefore, on the whole, there is no sufficient ground for placing the composition of Esther later than that of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, or the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus. On the other hand, there is no ground for regarding Esther as earlier than the other post-Captivity Historical Books—much less for placing it in the reign of Xerxes. Assuming Ahasuerus to be Xerxes (see § 3), it may be said that both the opening sentence and the conclusion of the work indicate that the reign of Xerxes was over. Consequently the earliest date that can reasonably be assigned to the Book is B.C. 464; and it is, on the whole,

most probable that it was composed twenty or thirty years later (B.C. 444–434).

2. There are no means of determining who was the author of "Esther." He was not Ezra. He may have been Mordecai, or, more probably, a younger contemporary of Mordecai's.

The author, whoever he was, almost certainly wrote in Persia, where he had access to the royal archives, which contained an account, more or less full, of the transactions he was desirous of recording. Much also must have been derived from personal observation,<sup>1</sup> and from communications with Mordecai and (perhaps) Esther.<sup>2</sup>

The Book is more purely a Historical Book than any other in Scripture. Its main scope is simply to give an account of the circumstances under which the Feast of Purim was instituted. The absence of the name of God, and the slightness of the religious and didactic elements are marked characteristics. The author's Persian breeding, together probably with other circumstances, has prevented his sharing the ordinary Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> As the description of Susa (i. 5, 6), that of the royal posts (viii. 10, 14), of Mordecai's apparel (do. 15), and the like.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* The genealogy of Mordecai (ii. 5), his private communications with Esther (do. 10, 11, 20, 22) and Hatach (iv. 6–16).

spirit of local attachment, while at the same time it has taught him a reticence with respect to the doctrines of his religion very unusual with his countrymen.

The narrative is striking and graphic; the style remarkably chaste and simple; and the sentences clear and unambiguous. The vocabulary, on the contrary, is, as might have been expected, not altogether pure, a certain number of Persian words being employed,<sup>3</sup> and also a few terms characteristic of the later Hebrew or "Chaldee" dialect.

3. The authenticity of the history of Esther has been impugned; but the main circumstances of the narrative, which at first sight appear improbable, are not so if the peculiarly extravagant and capricious character of the Persian monarch be taken into account. Etymologically, the name Ahasuerus is identical with the Persian *Khashayārsha* and the Greek Xerxes; and it is to this particular Persian monarch that the portrait of Ahasuerus exhibits a striking similarity. The chronological notices in the work also exactly fit this monarch's history; and the entire representation of the Court and kingdom is suitable to his time and

character. That we have no direct profane confirmation of the narrative of Esther must be admitted, for the identity of Mordecai with Matacas (see ii. 5) is too doubtful to be relied upon; but that we have none, is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that the accounts of the reign of Xerxes after his sixth year, and more particularly of his domestic life, are scanty in the extreme, the native records being silent, and the Greek writers concerning themselves almost entirely with those public events which bore upon the history of Greece. "Esther" is, in fact, the sole authority for the period and circumstances of which it treats; if untrue, it might have easily been proved to be untrue at the time when it was published, by reference to the extant "book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia," which it quotes (ii. 23, x. 2). It has, moreover, always been regarded by the Jews as an authentic account of the great deliverance which they celebrate annually by the feast of Purim.

4. In the Septuagint version occur "additions" to Esther consisting of five principal passages.<sup>4</sup>

Their unauthenticity is very evi-

<sup>3</sup> The language of Esther is even more impregnated with Persian than that of Ezra. Several Persian words, as *akhshatarpan*, *genez* (*g'naz*), *iggereth* (*iggera*), and *pithgam* (*pithgama*), are common to both Books. In addition to these, Esther has, besides some words of doubtful origin, the following list of terms, almost certainly Persian:—*akhshêranim*, "royal;" *karpas*, "cotton;" *kether*, "crown;" *parîmim*, "nobles;" *pathshêyen*, "a copy, a transcript;" and *pâr*, "the lot."

<sup>4</sup> 1. The first is introductory. It is dated in the second year of Ahasuerus, and contains (a) the pedigree of Mordecai, an anticipation of ii. 5; (b) a dream which he is supposed to have

had; (c) an account of the conspiracy of the two eunuchs and Mordecai's discovery of it; (d) a statement that Mordecai was at once rewarded with gifts; and (e) a statement that Haman wished ill to Mordecai and his people on account of the affair of the eunuchs. 2. The second occurs after iii. 13, and consists of a pretended translation of the letter sent out by Ahasuerus at the request of Haman. 3. The third follows on the close of ch. iv., and comprises (a) a long prayer ascribed to Mordecai; (b) another still longer prayer ascribed to Esther; and (c) an expanded account of Esther's venturing before the king unsummoned, in lieu of v. 1, 2. 4. The

dent. They contradict the original document, and are quite different in tone and style from the rest of the Book.

The principal intention of the "additions" is clear enough. They aim at giving a thoroughly religious character to a work in which, as originally written, the religious element was latent or only just perceptible. On the whole we may conclude that the Greek book of Esther, as we have it, was composed in the following way:—first a translation was made of the Hebrew text, honest for the most

part, but with a few very short additions and omissions; then the markedly religious portions were added, the opening passage, the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, the exordium to ch. v., the religious touches in ch. vi. (*vv.* 1 and 13); and the concluding verses of ch. x. Finally, the "letters of Ahasuerus" were composed by a writer more familiar than most Hellenists with the true spirit of the Greek tongue, and these, being accepted as genuine, were inserted in chs. iii. and viii.

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fourth is interposed between *vv.* 13 and 14 of ch. viii., and consists of a pretended copy of the letter sent out in the king's name by Mordecai. 5. The fifth and last occurs at the close of ch. x. It comprises (*a*) Mordecai's application of his dream to the events; (*b*) his appointment of the days of Purim as a permanent

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festival; and (*c*) an epilogue stating that the Greek version of Esther was brought (to Alexandria) in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra by a certain Dositheus, a priest, and was said by him to have been translated by a certain Lysimachus, of Jerusalem.

# THE BOOK

OF

# ESTHER.

<sup>a</sup> Ezra 1. 6.  
Dan. 9. 1.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 8. 9.  
<sup>c</sup> Dan. 6. 1.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Kin. 1. 16.  
<sup>e</sup> Neh. 1. 1.  
<sup>f</sup> Gen. 40. 20.  
ch. 2. 18.  
Mark 6. 21.

<sup>g</sup> See ch. 7. 8.  
Ezek. 23. 41.  
Amos 2. 8.  
& 6. 4.

**CHAP. 1.** NOW it came to pass in the days of <sup>a</sup>Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, <sup>b</sup>from India even unto Ethiopia, <sup>c</sup>over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) *that* in those days, when the king Ahasuerus <sup>d</sup>sat on the throne of his kingdom, which *was* in <sup>e</sup>Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he <sup>f</sup>made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, *being* before him: when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, *even* an hundred and fourscore days. ¶ And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were <sup>1</sup>present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; *where were* white, green, and <sup>2</sup>blue, *hangings*, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: <sup>3</sup>the beds *were* of gold and silver, upon a pavement <sup>4</sup>of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and <sup>5</sup>royal wine in abundance, <sup>6</sup>according to the state of the king. And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. found.

<sup>2</sup> Or, violet.

<sup>3</sup> Or, of porphyre, and marble, and clabuster, and stone of blue colour.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. wine of the kingdom.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. according to the hand of the king.

I. 1. *Ahasuerus*]. Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. His empire is rightly described as from India even unto Ethiopia. The satrapies of Darius Hystaspis reached 29 in number, and the nations under Xerxes were about 60. The 127 "provinces" include probably "sub-satrapies" and other smaller divisions of the great governments.

3. *in the third year*]. In this year, B.C. 483, Xerxes assembled the governors of provinces at Susa, in connexion with his contemplated expedition against Greece.

*the nobles*] Lit. "the first men." The Hebrew word used is one adopted from the Persian.

5. Feasts on this extensive scale were not unusual in the East. Cyrus is said on one occasion to have feasted "all the Persians." Even ordinarily, the later Persian monarchs entertained at their table 15,000 persons.

6. Rather, "where was an awning of fine white cotton and violet." White and blue (or violet) were the royal colours in Persia. Such awnings as are here described were very suitable to the pillared halls and porches

of a Persian summer-palace, and especially to the situation of that of Susa.

*the beds*] Rather, "couches" or "sofas," on which the guests reclined at meals.

*a pavement &c.*] See margin. It is generally agreed that the four substances named are stones; but to identify the stones, or even their colours, is difficult.

8. *according to the law*] An exception to the ordinary practice of compulsory drinking had been made on this occasion by the king's order.

9. *Vashti*] If Ahasuerus be Xerxes, Vashti should be Amestris, whom the Greeks regarded as the only legitimate wife of that monarch, and who was certainly married to him before he ascended the throne. The name may be explained either as a corruption of Amestris, or as a title, *vahishtha*, (Sanskrit, *vasishtha*, the superlative of *vasu*, "sweet"); and it may be supposed that the disgrace recorded (rr. 19-21, see note) was only temporary; Amestris in the later part of Xerxes' reign recovering her former dignity.

- 10 ¶ On the seventh day, when <sup>a</sup>the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, <sup>b</sup>Harbana, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven <sup>c</sup>chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she <sup>d</sup>was fair to look on.
- 12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment <sup>e</sup>by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. ¶ Then the king said to the <sup>f</sup>wise men, <sup>g</sup>which know the times, (for so <sup>h</sup>was the king's manner toward all that know law and judgment: and the next unto him <sup>i</sup>was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the <sup>j</sup>seven princes of Persia and Media, <sup>k</sup>which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the king-dom;) <sup>l</sup>What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that <sup>m</sup>are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For <sup>n</sup>this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall <sup>o</sup>despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. <sup>p</sup>Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus <sup>q</sup>shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. <sup>r</sup>If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment <sup>s</sup>from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, <sup>t</sup>that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate <sup>u</sup>unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall <sup>v</sup>give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.
- 21 ¶ And the saying <sup>w</sup>pleased the king and the princes; and the 22 king did according to the word of Memucan: for he sent letters

<sup>a</sup> 2 Sam. 13. 23.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 7. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Jer. 10. 7.  
Dan. 2. 12.  
Matt. 2. 1.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Chr. 12. 32.  
<sup>e</sup> Ezra 7. 11.  
<sup>f</sup> 2 Kin. 25. 10.

<sup>g</sup> Eph. 5. 33.

<sup>h</sup> Eph. 5. 33.  
Col. 3. 18.  
<sup>i</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Or, eunuchs.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. good of countenance.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. which was by the hand of his eunuchs.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. What to do.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. If it be good with the king.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. from before him.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. that it pass not away, ch. 8. 8. Dan. 6.

8. 12. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. unto her companion.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. was good in the eyes of the king.

11. to bring Vashti the queen] This command, though contrary to Persian customs, is not out of harmony with the character of Xerxes; and is evidently related as something strange and unusual. Otherwise the queen would not have refused to come.

13. wise men &c.] Not "astrologers," who were unknown in Persia; but rather men of practical wisdom, who knew the facts and customs of former times.

for so was the king's manner.] Some render, "for so was the king's business laid before all that knew law &c."

14. In Marsena we may perhaps recognise the famous Mardonius, and in Admatha, Xerxes' uncle, Artabanus.

the seven princes] There were seven fa-

milies of the first rank in Persia, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch's person. See marg. ref. note.

18. Translate -- "Likewise shall the princesses of Persia and Media, which have heard of the deed of the queen, say this day unto all the king's princes."

19. that it be not altered.] Cp. marg. reff. This was the theory. Practically, the monarch, if he chose, could always dispense with the law. It was therefore quite within his power to restore Vashti to her queenly dignity notwithstanding the present decree, if he so pleased.

22. he sent letters] The Persian system of posts incidentally noticed in the present

<sup>a</sup> ch. 8. 9.

<sup>r</sup> Eph. 5. 23,  
23, 21.

<sup>1</sup> Tim. 2. 12.

into all the king's provinces, <sup>2</sup>into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should <sup>r</sup>bear rule in his own house, and <sup>1</sup>that it should be published according to the language of every people.

**CHAP. 2.** AFTER these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done,

<sup>a</sup> ch. 1. 19, 20.

2 and <sup>a</sup>what was decreed against her. Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins 3 sought for the king: and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, <sup>2</sup>unto the custody of <sup>3</sup>Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be 4 given *them*: and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and 5 he did so. ¶ Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of 6 Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; <sup>b</sup>who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with <sup>4</sup>Jecooniah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the 7 king of Babylon had carried away. And he <sup>b</sup>brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, <sup>c</sup>his uncle's daughter: for she had

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kin. 24.

14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Chr. 33.

10, 20.

Jer. 24. 1.

<sup>c</sup> ver. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *that one should publish it according to the language of his people.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *unto the hand.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *Hegai*, ver. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *Jehoiachin*, 2 Kin. 24. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *nourished*, Eph. 6. 4.

Book (iii. 12-15; viii. 9-14), is in entire harmony with the accounts of Herodotus and Xenophon.

*into every province according to the writing thereof*] The practice of the Persians to address proclamations to the subject-nations in their own speech, and not merely in the language of the conqueror, is illustrated by the bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the Achaemenian monarchs, from Cyrus to Artaxerxes Ochus, each inscription being of the nature of a proclamation.

The decree was not unnecessary. The undue influence of women in domestic, and even in public, matters is a feature of the ancient Persian monarchy. Atossa completely ruled Darius. Xerxes himself was, in his later years, shamefully subject to Amestris. The example of the court would naturally infect the people. The decree therefore would be a protest, even if ineffectual, against a real and growing evil.

*and that it should be published &c.*] Render, "and speak the language of his own people;" in the sense that the wife's language, if different from her husband's, should in no case be allowed to prevail in the household.

II. 1-11. These events must belong to the time between the great assembly held at Susa in Xerxes' third year (B.C. 483), and the departure of the monarch on his expedition against Greece in his fifth year, B.C. 481.

3. *th: house of the women*] i.e. the "gynæceon," or "haram"—always an essential part of an Oriental palace (Cp. 1 K. vii. 8).

In the Persian palaces it was very extensive, since the monarchs maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as 300 or 400 concubines (cp. v. 14).

5. Mordecai, the eunuch (rr. 7, 11), has been conjectured to be the same as Mithras, who, according to Ctesias, was the most powerful of the eunuchs during the latter portion of the reign of Xerxes. Mordecai's line of descent is traced from a certain Kish, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in B.C. 598—the year of Jecooniah's captivity—who was his great-grandfather. The four generations, Kish, Shimei, Jair, Mordecai, correspond to the known generations in other cases, e.g. :—

High-priests.	Kings of Persia.	Royal stock of Judah.
Serniah	Cambyses	Jecooniah
Jozadak	Cyrus	Salthiel
Jeshua	Darius	Zerubbabel
Joakim	Xerxes	Hananiah

The age of Mordecai at the accession of Xerxes may probably have been about 30 or 40; that of Esther, his first cousin, about 20.

7. Hadassah ("myrtle") would seem to have been the Hebrew, and Esther the Persian, name of the damsel. Esther is

- neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* <sup>1</sup> fair and beautiful ; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for  
 8 his own daughter. ¶ So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were <sup>2</sup> gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's  
 9 house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him ; and he speedily gave her her <sup>3</sup> things for purification, with <sup>4</sup> such things  
 as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were* meet to be given her, out of the king's house : and <sup>5</sup> he preferred her and her  
 10 maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women. ¶ Esther  
 had not shewed her people nor her kindred : for Mordecai had  
 11 charged her that she should not shew it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, <sup>6</sup> to know how  
 12 Esther did, and what should become of her. ¶ Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of  
 13 the women ;) then thus came *every* maiden unto the king ; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house  
 14 of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines : she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called  
 15 by name. ¶ Now when the turn of Esther, <sup>7</sup> the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the  
 16 sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.  
 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she ob-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *fi'r* of form and good of countenance.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *her portions*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *he changed her*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *to know the peace*.

thought to be connected through the Zend with *star*, "star." But there is not at present any positive evidence of the existence in Old Persian of a kindred word.

10. The Persians had no special contempt for the Jews ; but, of course, they despised more or less all the subject races. Esther, with her Aryan name, may have passed for a native Persian.

11. Mordecai occupied, apparently, a humble place in the royal household. He was probably one of the porters or doorkeepers at the main entrance to the palace (v. 21).

14. *the second house of the women* i.e. Esther returned to the "house of the women," but not to the same part of it. She became an inmate of the "second house," or "house of the concubines," under the superintendence of a distinct officer, Shaashgaz.

15. *she required nothing*] The other virgins perhaps loaded themselves with precious ornaments of various kinds, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and the like. Esther let Hegai dress her as he would.

16. Tebeth [cp. the corresponding Egyptian month, *Tôth* or *Tubi*], corresponded nearly to our January.

*in the seventh year of his reign*] In December, B.C. 479, or January, B.C. 478. Xerxes quitted Sardis for Susa in, or soon after, September, B.C. 479. It has been regarded as a "difficulty" that Vashti's place, declared vacant in B.C. 483, was not supplied till the end of B.C. 479, four years afterwards. But as two years out of the four had been occupied by the Grecian expedition, the objection cannot be considered very weighty.

- tained grace and <sup>1</sup> favour <sup>2</sup> in his sight more than all the virgins ; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 1. 3. 18 instead of Vashti. Then the king <sup>a</sup> made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's feast ; and he made a <sup>3</sup> release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state
- <sup>1</sup> ver. 21. 19 of the king. ¶ And when the virgins were gathered together  
ch. 3. 2. 20 the second time, then Mordecai sat <sup>1</sup> in the king's gate. <sup>a</sup> Esther  
<sup>a</sup> ver. 10. had not *yet* showed her kindred nor her people ; as Mordecai had charged her : for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai,
- 21 like as when she was brought up with him. ¶ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, <sup>4</sup> Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept <sup>5</sup> the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
- <sup>1</sup> ch. 6. 2. 22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, <sup>1</sup> who told *it* unto Esther the queen ; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's
- 23 name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out ; therefore they were both hanged on a tree : and it was written in <sup>m</sup> the book of the chronicles before the king.
- <sup>m</sup> ch. 6. 1. **CHAP. 3.** AFTER these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the <sup>a</sup> Agagite, and advanced him, and
- <sup>a</sup> Num. 21.7. 2 set his seat above all the princes that *were* with him. And all
- <sup>b</sup> ch. 2. 19. the king's servants, that *were* <sup>b</sup> in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman : for the king had so commanded concerning
- <sup>c</sup> ver. 5. 3 him. But Mordecai <sup>c</sup> bowed not, nor did *him* reverence. Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto
- Ps. 15. 4. Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the <sup>a</sup> king's commandment ?
- <sup>d</sup> ver. 2. 4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand : for he had told them that he
- <sup>e</sup> ver. 2. 5 *was* a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai <sup>e</sup> bowed not,  
ch. 5. 9. 6 nor did him reverence, then was Haman <sup>f</sup> full of wrath. And he  
f Dan. 3. 10. thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone : for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai : wherefore Haman <sup>g</sup> sought
- <sup>g</sup> Ps. 13. 4.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *kindness*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *before him*.<sup>3</sup> Heb. *rest*.<sup>4</sup> Or, *Bigthana*, ch. 6. 2.<sup>5</sup> Heb. *the threshold*.

18. a *release*] Either remission of taxation, or of military service, or of both.

19. *when the virgins* &c.] Rather, "when virgins" &c. The words begin a new paragraph. There was a second collection of virgins (after that of *r. 8*), and it was at the time of this second collection that Mordecai had the good fortune to save the king's life.

21. Conspiracies inside the palace were ordinary occurrences in Persia. Xerxes was ultimately murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Aspamitras, a chamberlain and eunuch.

23. *both hanged on a tree*] i.e. "crucified" or "impaled"—the ordinary punishment of rebels and traitors in Persia.

*the book of the chronicles*] Ctesias drew his Persian history from them, and they are often glanced at by Herodotus.

III. 1. The name, Haman, is probably the same as the classical Omanes, and in ancient Persian, *Umana*, an exact equivalent of the Greek "Eumenes." Hammedatha is perhaps the same as *Madaita* or

*Mahadaita*, an old Persian name signifying "given by (or to) the moon."

*the Agagite*] The Jews generally understand by this expression "the descendant of Agag," the Amalekite monarch of 1 Sam. xv. Haman, however, by his own name, and the names of his sons (*ix. 7-9*) and his father, would seem to have been a genuine Persian.

The classical writers make no mention of Haman's advancement ; but their notices of the reign of Xerxes after *B.C.* 479 are exceedingly scanty.

2. Mordecai probably refused the required prostration, usual though it was, on religious grounds. Hence his opposition led on to his confession that he was a Jew (*v. 4*).

4. *whether Mordecai's matters would stand*] Rather, "whether Mordecai's words would hold good"—whether, that is, his excuse, that he was a Jew, would be allowed as a valid reason for his refusal.

6. *to destroy all the Jews*] In the East massacres of a people, a race, a class, have



- to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom  
 7 of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai. ¶ In the first month,  
 that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus,  
 they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, <sup>a</sup> ch. 9. 21.  
 and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that *is*, the  
 8 month Adar. And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is  
 a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people  
 in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse  
 from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it  
 9 is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king,  
 let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay  
 ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have  
 the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.  
 10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto  
 Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.  
 11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the  
 people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.  
 12 ¶ Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of  
 the first month, and there was written according to all that  
 Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the  
 governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of  
 every people of every province according to the writing thereof,  
 and to every people after their language; in the name of king  
 13 Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And  
 the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces,  
 to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young  
 and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the

<sup>i</sup> Ezr 4. 13.  
Acts 16. 20.

<sup>k</sup> Gen. 41. 42.  
<sup>i</sup> ch. 8. 2, 8.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 8. 9.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 1. 22.  
& 8. 9.  
<sup>o</sup> 1 Kin. 21. 8.  
ch. 8. 8, 10.  
<sup>p</sup> ch. 8. 10.

<sup>q</sup> ch. 8. 12,  
&c.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *u'cet*, or, *equal*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *weigh*.

<sup>5</sup> Or, *secretaries*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *to destroy them*.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *oppressor*, ch. 7. 8.

at all times been among the incidents of history, and would naturally present themselves to the mind of a statesman. The Magophonia, or the great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius Hystaspis, was an event not then fifty years old, and was commemorated annually. A massacre of the Scythians had occurred about a century previously.

7. *In the first month &c.* i.e. in March or April of B.C. 474.

"Pur" is supposed to be an Old Persian word etymologically connected with the Latin *pars*, and signifying "part" or "lot." The practice of casting lots to obtain a lucky day obtains still in the East, and is probably extremely ancient. A lot seems to have been cast, or a throw of some kind made, for each day of the month and each month of the year. The day and month which obtained the best throws were then selected. Assyrian calendars note lucky and unlucky days as early as the eighth century B.C. Lots were in use both among the Oriental and the classical nations from a remote antiquity.

"Adar," the twelfth month, corresponds nearly to our March. It seems to have derived its name from *adar*, "splendor," because of the brightness of the sun and the flowers at that time.

8. *ten thousand talents of silver*] Accord-

ing to Herodotus, the regular revenue of the Persian king consisted of 14,560 silver talents; so that, if the same talent is intended, Haman's offer would have exceeded two-thirds of a year's revenue (or two and a half millions sterling). Another Persian subject, Pythius, once offered to present Xerxes with four millions of gold darics, or about four millions and a half of our money.

11. *The silver is given to thee*] Some understand this to mean that Xerxes refused the silver which Haman had offered to him; but the passage is better explained as a grant to him of all the property of such Jews as should be executed (v. 13).

12. *on the thirteenth day*] Haman had, apparently (cp. v. 7 with v. 13), obtained by his use of the lot the 13th day of Adar as the lucky day for destroying the Jews. This may have caused him to fix on the 13th day of another month for the commencement of his enterprise. The Jews throughout the empire had thus from nine to eleven months' warning of the peril which threatened them.

13. The Jews at present keep three days, the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th of Adar, as connected with "the feast of Purim;" but they make the 13th a fast, commemorative of the fast of Esther (iv. 16), and keep the feast itself on the 14th and 15th.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 8. 11.  
<sup>c</sup> ch. 8. 13, 14.

<sup>f</sup> See ch. 8.  
 15.  
 Prov. 29. 2.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Sam. 1. 11.  
<sup>b</sup> Josh. 7. 6.  
 Ezek. 27. 30.  
<sup>c</sup> Gen. 27. 34.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 3. 9.

<sup>e</sup> ch. 3. 14, 15.

<sup>f</sup> ch. 5. 1.  
<sup>g</sup> Dan. 2. 9.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 5. 2.  
 & 8. 4.

thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, 14 and <sup>a</sup>to take the spoil of them for a prey. <sup>a</sup>The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against 15 that day. The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but <sup>a</sup>the city Shushan was perplexed.

**CHAP. 4.** WHEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai <sup>a</sup>rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth <sup>b</sup>with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and <sup>c</sup>cried with a loud and a bitter 2 cry; and came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter 3 into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there* was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and <sup>d</sup>many lay in sackcloth and 4 ashes. ¶ So Esther's maids and her <sup>e</sup>chamberlains came and told <sup>f</sup>it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from 5 him: but he received *it* not. Then called Esther for Hatach, <sup>g</sup>one of the king's chamberlains, <sup>h</sup>whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to 6 know what it *was*, and why it *was*. So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which *was* before the king's 7 gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of <sup>d</sup>the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. 8 Also he gave him <sup>e</sup>the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make re- 9 quest before him for her people. And Hatach came and told 10 Esther the words of Mordecai. ¶ Again Esther spake unto 11 Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; all the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into <sup>f</sup>the inner court, who is not called, <sup>g</sup>*there is* one law of his to put *him* to death, except such <sup>h</sup>to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not 12 been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And they 13 told to Mordecai Esther's words. ¶ Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape

<sup>1</sup> Heb. sackcloth and ashes were laid under many,

Isai. 58. 5. Dan. 9. 3.  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. eunuchs.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. whom he had set before her.

15 Shushan was perplexed] Susa was now the capital of Persia, and the main residence of the Persians of high rank. These, being attached to the religion of Zoroaster, would naturally sympathise with the Jews, and he disturbed at their threatened destruction. Even apart from this bond of union, the decree was sufficiently strange and ominous to "perplex" thoughtful citizens.

IV. 2. none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth] This law is not elsewhere mentioned; but its principle—that nothing of evil omen is to be obtruded on

the monarch—has been recognized throughout the East in all ages.

4. Esther's maids...told it her] Esther's nationality and her relationship to Mordecai were probably by this time known to her attendants, though still concealed from the king. See vii. 4.

11. the golden sceptre] In all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis the monarch holds a long tapering staff (probably the sceptre of Esther) in his right hand. It was death to intrude on the privacy of the Persian king uninvited.

14 in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there <sup>1</sup>enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?

15, 16 ¶ Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, Go, gather together all the Jews that are <sup>2</sup>present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink <sup>3</sup>three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: <sup>4</sup>and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai <sup>5</sup>went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

CEAP. 5. NOW it came to pass <sup>a</sup>on the third day, that Esther put on *her* royal apparel, and stood in <sup>b</sup>the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the <sup>2</sup>house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* <sup>c</sup>she obtained favour in his sight: and <sup>d</sup>the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the <sup>3</sup>sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? <sup>e</sup>it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, *If it seem good unto the king*, let the king and Haman come this day unto <sup>4</sup>the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther <sup>5</sup>had prepared. ¶ And the king said unto Esther at the banquet <sup>6</sup>of wine, <sup>f</sup>What *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall <sup>7</sup>be performed. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition <sup>8</sup>and my request *is*; If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and <sup>9</sup>to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the

<sup>a</sup> See ch. 5. 1.

<sup>b</sup> See Gen. 43. 14.

<sup>c</sup> See ch. 4. 16.

<sup>d</sup> See ch. 4. 11.

<sup>e</sup> & ch. 6. 4.

<sup>f</sup> Prov. 21. 1.

<sup>g</sup> ch. 4. 11. & 8. 4.

<sup>h</sup> So Mark 6. 23.

<sup>i</sup> ch. 7. 2.

<sup>j</sup> ch. 9. 12.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *respiration*, Job 9. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *found*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *passed*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *to do*.

14. *from another place*] i.e. "from some other quarter." Mordecai probably concluded from the prophetic Scriptures that God would not allow His people to be destroyed before His purposes with respect to them were accomplished, and was therefore satisfied that deliverance would arise from one quarter or another.

*thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed*] i.e. "a divine vengeance will overtake thee and thine, if thou neglectest thy plain duty." Though the *name* of God is not contained in the Book of Esther, there is in this verse distinct tacit allusion to God's promises, and to the direction of human events by Divine Providence.

16. Again the religious element hews itself. Esther's fast could have no object but to obtain God's favour and protection in the dangerous course on which she was about to enter.

V. 1. *over against the gate*] This is the

usual situation of the throne in the "throne-room" of an Oriental palace. The monarch, from his raised position, can see into the court through the doorway opposite to him, which is kept open.

3. *it shall be even given thee &c.*] Xerxes, on another occasion, when pleased with one of his wives, offered to grant her any request whatever, without limitation. Cp. marg. ref.

4. Esther seems to have been afraid to make her real request of Xerxes too abruptly. She concluded that the king would understand that she had a real petition in the background, and would recur to it, as in fact he did (r. 6, vii. 2).

6. *the banquet of wine*] After the meats were removed, it was customary in Persia to continue the banquet for a considerable time with fruits and wine. During this part of the feast, the king renewed his offer.

- 9 king hath said. ¶ Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, <sup>a</sup>that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman <sup>b</sup>refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and <sup>c</sup>called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and <sup>d</sup>the multitude of his children, and all <sup>e</sup>the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had <sup>f</sup>advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.
- 12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a <sup>g</sup>gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow <sup>h</sup>speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused <sup>i</sup>the gallows to be made.

**CHAP. 6.** ON that night <sup>j</sup>could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring "the book of records of the chronicles; and 2 they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of <sup>k</sup>Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the <sup>l</sup>door, who sought to lay hand 3 on the king Ahasuerus. ¶ And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done 4 for him. And the king said, Who <sup>m</sup>is in the court? Now Haman was come into <sup>n</sup>the outward court of the king's house, <sup>o</sup>to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come 6 in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man <sup>p</sup>whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king 7 delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man <sup>q</sup>whom the king delighteth to 8 honour, <sup>r</sup>let the royal apparel be brought <sup>s</sup>which the king useth

<sup>b</sup> See ch. 5. 1.  
<sup>c</sup> ch. 5. 14.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *caused to come.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *tree.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *the king's sleep fled away.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *Bigthan*, ch. 2. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *threshold.*

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *in whose honour the king delighteth.*

<sup>7</sup> Heb. *in whose honour the king delighteth.*

<sup>8</sup> Heb. *Let them bring the royal apparel.*

<sup>9</sup> Heb. *wherewith the king clotheth himself.*

9. *he stood not up, nor moved for him*] This was undoubtedly a serious breach of Persian etiquette, and may well have angered Haman.

10. *Zeresh*] This name is probably connected with the Zend *zara*, "gold." Cp. the Greek "Chrysis."

11. *the multitude of his children*] Herodotus tells us that, "next to prowess in arms, it was regarded as the greatest proof of manly excellence in Persia to be the father of many sons." Haman had ten sons (marg. ref.)

14. A gallows, in the ordinary sense, is scarcely intended, since hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention, no doubt, was to crucify (ii. 23 note) or impale

Mordecai; and the pale or cross was to be 75 feet high, to make the punishment more conspicuous.

*speak thou unto the king &c.*] Requests for leave to put persons to death were often made to Persian kings by their near relatives, but only rarely by others.

VI. 3. It was a settled principle of the Persian government that "Royal Benefactors" were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll, and care was taken that they should be properly recompensed, though they sometimes waited for months or years before they were recompensed.

8. The honours here proposed by Haman were such as Persian monarchs rarely

- to wear, and <sup>d</sup> the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown  
 9 royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse  
 be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes,  
 that they may array the man *withal* whom the king delighteth  
 to honour, and <sup>1</sup>bring him on horseback through the street of  
 the city, <sup>e</sup>and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the  
 10 man whom the king delighteth to honour. Then the king said  
 to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and the horse, as  
 thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth  
 at the king's gate: <sup>2</sup>let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.  
 11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mor-  
 decai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the  
 city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the  
 12 man whom the king delighteth to honour. ¶ And Mordecai  
 came again to the king's gate. But Haman <sup>3</sup>hasted to his house  
 13 mourning, <sup>4</sup>and having his head covered. And Haman told  
 Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen  
 him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If  
 Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast be-  
 gun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely  
 14 fall before him. And while they *were* yet talking with him,  
 came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto  
<sup>5</sup>the banquet that Esther had prepared.  
**CHAP. 7.** SO the king and Haman came <sup>6</sup>to banquet with Esther  
 2 the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second  
 day <sup>7</sup>at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition, queen Esther?  
 and it shall be granted thee: and *what is* thy request? and it  
 3 shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom. Then  
 Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in  
 thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given  
 4 me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are  
<sup>8</sup>sold, I and my people, <sup>9</sup>to be destroyed, to be slain, and to  
 perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen,  
 I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not counter-  
 5 vail the king's damage. Then the king Ahasuerus answered  
 and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he,  
 6 <sup>10</sup>that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said,  
 The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. Then Haman  
 7 was afraid <sup>11</sup>before the king and the queen. ¶ And the king  
 arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went* into the  
 palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life  
 to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined  
 8 against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the  
 palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kin. 1. 33.<sup>e</sup> Gen. 41. 13.<sup>f</sup> 2 Chr. 26. 20.<sup>g</sup> 2 Sam. 15.<sup>h</sup> Jer. 14. 3, 4.<sup>a</sup> ch. 5. 8.<sup>a</sup> ch. 5. 6.<sup>b</sup> ch. 3. 9.<sup>c</sup> & 4. 7.<sup>1</sup> Heb. *cause him to ride.*<sup>2</sup> Heb. *suffer not a whit to fall.*<sup>3</sup> Heb. *to drink.*<sup>4</sup> Heb. *that they should de-  
stroy, and kill, and cause  
to perish.*<sup>5</sup> Heb. *whose heart hath  
filled him.*<sup>6</sup> Heb. *The man adversary.*<sup>7</sup> Or, *at the presence of.*

allowed to subjects. Each act would have been a capital offence if done without permission. Still we find Persian monarchs allowing their subjects in these or similar acts under certain circumstances.

12. It is quite consonant with Oriental notions that Mordecai, after receiving the extraordinary honours assigned him, should return to the palace and resume his former humble employment.

VII. 4. The king now learnt, perhaps for the first time, that his favourite was a Jewess.

*although the enemy &c.] i.e.* "although the enemy (Haman) would not (even in that case) compensate (by his payment to the treasury) for the king's loss of so many subjects."

8. Like the Greeks and Romans, the Persians reclined at their meals on sofas or couches. Haman, in the intensity of his

- c ch. 1. 6. was fallen upon 'the bed whereon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also 'before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they 'covered Haman's face. And 'Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, 'the 'gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So 'they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.
- CHAP. 8.** ON that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told 'what he *was* unto her. And the king took off 'his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. ¶ And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, 'and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then 'the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, and said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing *seem* right before the king, and I *be* pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse 'the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, 'which he wrote to destroy the Jews which *are* in all the king's provinces: for how can I 'endure to see 'the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, 'I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, 'may no man reverse. ¶ Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* 'from India
- a ch. 2. 7.  
 b ch. 3. 10.  
 c ch. 4. 11.  
 & 5. 2.  
 d Neh. 2. 3.  
 ch. 7. 4.  
 e ver. 1.  
 Prov. 13. 22.  
 f Dan. 6. 8,  
 12, 15.  
 g ch. 3. 12.  
 h ch. 1. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *with me*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *free*.<sup>3</sup> Heb. *and she wept, and besought him*.<sup>4</sup> Heb. *the device*.<sup>5</sup> Or, *who wrote*.<sup>6</sup> Heb. *be able that I may see*.

supplication, had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther's feet.

*they covered Haman's face*] The Macedonians and the Romans are known to have commonly muffled the heads of prisoners before executing them. It may have been also a Persian custom.

VIII. 1. *give the house of Haman*] Confiscation of goods accompanied public execution in Persia as in other Oriental countries.

2. *his ring*] *i.e.* the royal signet by which the decrees of the government were signed.

*over the house of Haman*] Not only the building and the furniture, but the household—the vast train of attendants of all

kinds that was attached to the residence of a Persian noble.

3. Though Haman was dead, his work was not yet undone. The royal decree had gone forth, and, according to Persian notions, could not be directly recalled or reversed (v. 8). Mordecai did not dare, without express permission from the king, to take any steps even to stay execution. And Esther, being in favour, once more took the initiative.

8. *Write...as it liketh you &c.*] [See i. 19 note. Practically, Ahasuerus reversed the "device" of Haman].

9. Sivan corresponds nearly to our June; it was the second month from the issue of the first edict (iii. 12).

- unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province 'according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. \*And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and 'to take the spoil of them for a prey, "upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. "The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was 'published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace. ¶ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of <sup>2</sup>blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and <sup>o</sup>the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had <sup>p</sup>light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast <sup>q</sup>and a good day. And many of the people of the land <sup>r</sup>became Jews; for <sup>s</sup>the fear of the Jews fell upon them.
- CHAP. 9.** NOW <sup>a</sup>in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, <sup>b</sup>when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews <sup>c</sup>had rule over them that hated them;) the Jews <sup>d</sup>gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as <sup>e</sup>sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for <sup>f</sup>the fear of them fell upon all

<sup>1</sup> ch. 1. 22.  
<sup>2</sup> & 3. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kin. 21. 8.  
<sup>4</sup> ch. 3. 12, 13.

<sup>5</sup> See ch. 9.  
<sup>6</sup> 10, 15, 16.  
<sup>7</sup> ch. 3. 13,  
<sup>8</sup> & c.  
<sup>9</sup> & 9. 1.  
<sup>10</sup> ch. 3. 14,  
<sup>11</sup> 15.

<sup>12</sup> See ch. 3.  
<sup>13</sup> 15.  
<sup>14</sup> Prov. 20. 2.  
<sup>15</sup> Ps. 97. 11.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Sam. 25. 8.  
<sup>17</sup> ch. 9. 19, 22.  
<sup>18</sup> r Ps. 18. 43.  
<sup>19</sup> Gen. 35. 5.  
<sup>20</sup> Ex. 15. 16.  
<sup>21</sup> Dent. 2. 25.  
<sup>22</sup> & 11. 25.  
<sup>23</sup> ch. 9. 2.  
<sup>24</sup> a ch. 8. 12.  
<sup>25</sup> b ch. 3. 13.  
<sup>26</sup> c 2 Sam. 22.  
<sup>27</sup> 41.  
<sup>28</sup> d ch. 8. 11.  
<sup>29</sup> & ver. 16.  
<sup>30</sup> e Ps. 71. 13,  
<sup>31</sup> 24.  
<sup>32</sup> f ch. 8. 17.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. revealed.

<sup>2</sup> Or, violet.

10. riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries] Most moderns translate "riders upon coursers and mules, the offspring of mares;" but the words translated "mules" and "mares," are of very doubtful signification, since they scarcely occur elsewhere. The real meaning of the clause must remain doubtful; perhaps the true translation is, "riders upon coursers of the king's stud, offspring of high-bred steeds." So r. 14.

11. This fresh decree allowed the Jews to stand on their defence, and to kill all who attacked them. It has been pronounced incredible, that any king would thus have sanctioned civil war in all the great cities of his empire; but some even of the more sceptical critics allow that Xerxes might not improbably have done so.

14. being hastened] Between Sivan, the third month (June), when the posts went out, and Adar, the twelfth month (March), when the struggle was to take place, the interval would be one of above eight months; but all haste was made, with the object of their being no misunderstanding.

15. See i. 6 note. The "crown" was not a crown like the king's, but a mere golden band or coronet.

a garment] Or, "an inner robe." The tunic or inner robe of the king was of purple, striped with white.

17. became Jews] Joined the nation as proselytes, so casting in their lot with them.

IX. 1. drew near] Or, "arrived," or "reached the time" specified (iii. 13, viii. 12).

- 3 people. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and <sup>1</sup> officers of the king, helped the Jews; 4 because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai *was* great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai <sup>o</sup> waxed greater and greater. ¶ Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did 6 <sup>2</sup> what they would unto those that hated them. And in Shushan 7 the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And 8 Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, and Poratha, and 9 Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, 10 and Vajezatha, <sup>h</sup> the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; <sup>i</sup> but on the spoil laid they 11 not their hand. ¶ On that day the number of those that were 12 slain in Shushan the palace <sup>3</sup> was brought before the king. And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now <sup>4</sup> what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what <sup>i</sup> is thy request further? and it shall be done. 13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which <sup>are</sup> in Shushan to do to morrow also <sup>i</sup> according unto this day's decree, and <sup>4</sup> let Haman's ten sons <sup>m</sup> be 14 hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they 15 hanged Haman's ten sons. For the Jews that <sup>were</sup> in Shushan <sup>n</sup> gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; <sup>o</sup> but 16 on the prey they laid not their hand. ¶ But the other Jews that <sup>were</sup> in the king's provinces <sup>p</sup> gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, <sup>q</sup> but they 17 laid not their hands on the prey, on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day <sup>5</sup> of the same rested 18 they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that <sup>were</sup> at Shushan assembled together <sup>r</sup> on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the

<sup>v</sup> 2 Sam. 3. 1.  
<sup>1</sup> Chr. 11. 9.  
 Prov. 4. 18.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 5. 11.  
 Job 18. 19.  
 & 27. 13, 14, 15.  
 Ps. 21. 10.  
<sup>i</sup> See ch. 8. 11.

<sup>k</sup> ch. 5. 6.  
 & 7. 2.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 8. 11.  
<sup>m</sup> 2 Sam. 21. 6, 9.

<sup>n</sup> ver. 2.  
 & ch. 8. 11.  
<sup>o</sup> ver. 10.

<sup>p</sup> ver. 2.  
 & ch. 8. 11.  
<sup>q</sup> See ch. 8. 11.

<sup>r</sup> ver. 11. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. those which did the business that belonged to the king.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. according to their will.  
<sup>3</sup> Heb. came.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. let men hang.  
<sup>5</sup> Heb. in it.

3. *all the rulers...helped the Jews*] i.e. the Persians, who formed the standing army which kept the Empire in subjection, and were at the disposal of the various governors of provinces, took the Jews' side. The enemies of the Jews (e.g. v. 16) were almost entirely to be found among the idolatrous people of the subject nations, for whose lives neither the Persians generally, nor their monarchs, cared greatly.

6. By "Shushan the palace (or the fort)," is probably meant the whole of the upper town, which occupied an area of above a hundred acres, and contained many residences besides the actual palace. The Jews would not have ventured to shed blood within the palace-precincts.

7-10. Most of these names are Persian, and readily traceable to Old Persian roots.

10. *on the spoil laid they not their hand*] As they might have done (see marg. ref.).

15. *Shushan*] Here probably the lower town, which lay east of the upper one, and was of about the same size (cp. v. 6 note).

16. *seventy and five thousand*] The LXX. gives the number as fifteen thousand; and this amount seems more in proportion to the 800 slain in Susa.

18. See iii. 13 note.

19. *the Jews of the villages &c.*] Rather, "the Jews of the country districts, that dwell in the country towns," as distinguished from those who dwelt in the metropolis.



- unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar <sup>a</sup> *a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of*
- 20 "sending portions one to another. ¶ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the
- 21 provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both nigh and far, to stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,*
- 22 as the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was <sup>2</sup> turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of <sup>2</sup> sending portions one
- 23 to another, and gifts to the poor. And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto
- 24 them; because Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, <sup>2</sup> had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, to <sup>1</sup> consume
- 25 them, and to destroy them; but <sup>2a</sup> when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should <sup>b</sup> return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.
- 26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of <sup>3</sup> Pur. Therefore for all the words of *'this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto*
- 27 them, the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as <sup>4</sup> joined themselves unto them, so as it should not <sup>4</sup> fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every
- 28 year; and *that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not <sup>5</sup> fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them <sup>6</sup> perish from their seed.*
- 29 ¶ Then Esther the queen, <sup>6</sup> the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with <sup>7</sup> all authority, to confirm this <sup>7</sup> second
- 30 letter of Purim. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to <sup>8</sup> the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of
- 31 Ahasuerus, *with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed <sup>8</sup> for themselves and for their seed, the matters of <sup>8</sup> the*
- 32 fastings and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

CHAP. 10. AND the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *crush*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *when she came.*

<sup>3</sup> That is, *lot*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *pass*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *pass*.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *be ended.*

<sup>7</sup> Heb. *all strength.*

<sup>8</sup> Heb. *for their souls.*

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 16. 11,

14.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 8. 17.

<sup>d</sup> ver. 22.

Neh. 8. 10, 12.

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 30. 11.

<sup>f</sup> ver. 19.

Neh. 8. 11.

<sup>g</sup> ch. 3. 6, 7.

<sup>h</sup> ver. 13. 14.

ch. 7. 5, &c.

& 8. 3, &c.

<sup>i</sup> ch. 7. 10.

Ps. 7. 16.

<sup>j</sup> ver. 20.

<sup>k</sup> ch. 8. 17.

Isai. 56. 3, 6.

Zeck. 2. 11.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 2. 15.

<sup>m</sup> See ch. 8. 10.

& ver. 20.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 1. 1.

<sup>o</sup> ch. 4. 3, 16.

29. *this second letter of Purim*] Mordecai's first letter (v. 20) was to some extent tentative, a recommendation. The Jews generally having accepted the recommendation (rr. 23, 27), he and Esther now wrote a second letter which was mandatory.

31. *the matters of the fastings and their cry*] The Jews of the provinces had added to the form of commemoration proposed by Mordecai certain observances with respect to fasting and wailing, and Mordecai's second letter sanctioned these.

32. As "the book" elsewhere in Esther

always means a particular book—"the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia"—(ii. 23, vi. 1, x. 2) it seems best to give it the same sense here.

X. 1. *a tribute*] Perhaps an allusion to some fresh arrangement of the tribute likely to have followed on the return of Xerxes from Greece.

*upon the isles of the sea*] Cyprus, Aradus, the island of Tyre, Platea, &c., remained in the hands of the Persians after the victories of the Greeks, and may be the "isles" here intended.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 10. 5.  
 Ps. 72. 10.  
 Isai. 21. 15.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 8. 15.  
 & 9. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. 41. 40.  
 2 Chr. 29. 7.  
<sup>d</sup> Neh. 2. 10.  
 Ps. 122. 8, 9.

2 and *upon* "the isles of the sea. And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, <sup>b</sup>whereunto the king <sup>1</sup>advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?"

3 For Mordecai the Jew *was* 'next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, "seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *made him great*.

2. *power and...might*] In the later years of Xerxes his "power and might" were chiefly shewn in the erection of magnificent buildings, more especially at Persepolis. He abstained from military expeditions.

*ki..gs of Media and Persia*] Media takes precedence of Persia because the kingdom

of Media had preceded that of Persia, and in the "book of the Chronicles" its history came first.

3. *Mordecai...was next unto king Ahasuerus*] See ii. 5 note. Artabanus (i. 14 note) was favourite towards the end of Xerxes' reign, i.e. in his 20th and 21st years.